

**STATEMENT BY MR. LEGWAILA J. LEGWAILA, SPECIAL ADVISER ON
AFRICA TO THE AFRICAN GROUP
ON MONDAY 22 MAY 2006
AT UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS**

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates

Brothers and Sisters,

1. I am particularly pleased to be meeting with you today soon after my assumption of duty as the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Africa. For me, this meeting brings back many memories of the years that I had the privilege of representing my country here at the United Nations.
2. To see some very old friends and colleagues here, as well as some relatively new ones, and to have the opportunity to once again cooperate closely with you all in moving forward the African agenda, is especially gratifying.
3. In a sense, this is a particularly exciting time for the African agenda.
4. When I left New York six years ago, we were still striving to place Africa at the top of the global agenda. Civil wars were raging in several parts of our continent; Africa was still perceived as not doing enough to assume primary responsibility for its future development; HIV/AIDS was spreading like wild fire and the world felt Africa was still in denial on its impact; Official Development Assistance (ODA) per capita was declining in real terms, and Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiatives just started to bring about some debt relief to African countries; Growth in income per capita was stagnant and income growth was somewhat low.

5. Brothers and Sisters, today the picture is quite different; we should take justifiable pride in what has been achieved and in our role in bringing this about.
6. Today, Africa ranks very high on the international agenda. The President of the People's Republic of China has just concluded a historic visit to Africa. The Prime Minister of Japan has also just ended a visit to Africa. Wars in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Central African Republic, Burundi, Angola, and the DRC have ended. For the first time, we have a democratically elected woman as Head of state in Africa. Last Friday, when President Kikwete joined us at the United Nations headquarters to launch the "*Governance for the Future – Democracy and Development in the LDCs*", he offered important and fresh insights into the consolidation of democracy in Africa.
7. Africa is taking major steps in assuming responsibility for its problems. In Burundi, African countries themselves stepped in to provide peacekeepers until the UN could take over. In Darfur, again, Africans have taken the lead by providing the observers for the African Mission in Sudan (AMIS). The new architecture of peace and security for the continent, for example, the AU's Peace and Security Council, is gradually being built up and is already playing a key role in handling conflict in Africa.
8. NEPAD and the African Union have given a new dynamism and vision to the African agenda and clearly demonstrated Africa willingness, capacity, and determination to assume full control of its destiny. The entire international community has welcomed NEPAD as an African-owned and African-driven, political, economic, and social development blueprint for the continent's future, and the African Peer Review Mechanism has been widely acclaimed as a positive, innovative approach to the promotion of good governance.
9. In this new context of NEPAD, African countries have acknowledged the gravity of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, adopted their own regional strategies to deal with it and are working closely with their development partners. In the past year, historic strides

have been made in debt cancellation for 13 African countries, and in increasing official development assistance.

10. Brothers and Sisters, it is important to acknowledge these positive developments in order to bring some balance and perspective into the international discussion on Africa at the United Nations and elsewhere, and avoid the sense of pessimism which could easily engulf us all, as we listen to the constant international media litany of famine, war and diseases in their portrayal of Africa.
11. Equally important, we should recognise that NEPAD committed Africa to a partnership with the international community. Just as we expect the Africa's development partners to deliver on their pledges of support, so must we fulfill our part. As such, African countries will need to implement sound macroeconomic policies, structural and institutional reforms and ensure good governance. In addition, African countries ought to create an enabling business environment to encourage private sector initiative and attract foreign direct investment.
12. Furthermore, African governments should accelerate the process of regional economic integration by selecting and implementing regional infrastructure projects. To reach this objective, they should strengthen regional economic communities and address issues of intra-African trade, as well as the diversification of production and export bases.
13. I want to assure you of my determination to work closely and effectively with you in promoting and supporting the whole African agenda within the United Nations, from peace and security to socio-economic development, to ensuring that the voice of African civil society, and the private sector, is heard loud and clear within these halls. In this regard, I acknowledge that we have a great amount of work to do to ensure that the many promises made by the international community to Africa are kept, the impressive pledges fulfilled, and Africa's genuine interests promoted.

14. OSAA, under my leadership, will work in close harmony and coordination with all my brothers who at present occupying strategic positions in the international system, in support of Africa: in particular, President Alpha Konare, Chairman of the AU Commission; Donald Kaberuka at the African Development Bank; Abdoulie Janneh at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); Gilbert Hounou at UNDP; Firmino Mucavele at the NEPAD Secretariat; Bernard Kouassi at the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Secretariat.
15. Here, in New York, OSAA will ensure to the best of its capacity that each of the ongoing exercises of Mandate Review, Reform of the UN System, and the quest for Coherence of the UN's development system, are carried out in a manner that protects the vital interests of Africa, and that Africa's views are fully heard, and appropriately taken into account.
16. Let me also assure you that in preparing the Secretary-General's annual report to the UNGA on Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development as well as the one on Progress in and international support for the implementation of NEPAD, OSAA will as always be analytical and forward-looking, and will consult effectively with all appropriate stakeholders.
17. OSAA will also take very seriously its advocacy role in support of Africa, and in this regard will work closely with our colleagues in DPI and ECA. As 34 of the 50 Least Developed Countries are in Africa, I intend to work very closely with my colleague and friend, Mr. Chowdhury, head of the Office of the High Representative of the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS), and the representatives of these countries in moving forward the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action (the mid-term review of which is scheduled for September this year in New York).
18. Dear Colleagues, I would now like to say a little more on OSAA's work. As you know, in July 2004, the Secretary-General established his Advisory Panel on

International Support for NEPAD for the specific purpose of helping to galvanize the requisite additional support for the blueprint from the international community. This Panel, chaired by former Commonwealth Secretary-General, Chief Anyaoku with other distinguished personalities as members, has produced an excellent report with which you are familiar. The Panel will be meeting later today, here in New York to review the draft of its second report to be issued next month. Members of the Panel have undertaken consultation visits to several of Africa's development partners, such as, US, EU, UK, Japan and the People's Republic of China, to ensure the maximum support for Africa's development agenda.

19. OSAA's work in support of peace and security in Africa has included the organization of a series of workshops and other meetings putting the spotlight on DDR, as well as the role of natural resources exploitation in the perpetuation of armed conflicts in Africa. (Experts Group Meeting scheduled to take place in Cairo 17-19 June 2006)

20. Finally, I want to assure you that OSAA recognizes the supportive role it has to play for the African missions in New York on a wide range of issues; we will willingly and enthusiastically continue in this supportive role, within the boundaries of our very limited capacity and resources.

21. I thank you.